



It's a bird; it's a plane!

A low-flying airplane was cause for amusement in the production of advertisements for the annual Thanks Giving Appeal, which begins this weekend. See page 6.



Fighting famine

Parishioners of St. John's the Evangelist on Humboldt Street in Rochester recently completed a fundraising effort to help build a dam over in Ethiopia. See page 20.

COURIER-JOURNAL

Catholic Diocese of Rochester

50 Cents

Thursday, October 15, 1987

20 Pages

Evangelization work continues despite inactive diocesan office

By Teresa A. Parsons

If 1983 marked a shining moment for evangelization in the Diocese of Rochester, then 1987 might qualify as one of its darker nights.

In June, 1983, more than 1,000 people gathered at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva for "Harvest a Hundredfold," a day-long series of workshops and speeches on evangelization. The event marked the climax of several years' work by the Diocesan Pastoral Council's Task Force on Evangelization, and provided impetus for establishing a diocesan Office of Evangelization.

In June, 1987, however, that office formally became inactive with the announcement that its coordinator, Deacon Thomas Kluchko, had been reassigned. He has not been replaced.

Personnel and budget constraints had long prevented the office from being very active, observed Sister Mary Hilaire Gaelens, RSM, director of the Division of Special Pastoral Ministries under which the office was incorporated. For the past three years, she said, Kluchko filled the coordinator's position on a part-time, volunteer basis, serving mainly as a resource person for parishes.

Meanwhile, evangelization is gaining increasing attention as a priority in urban parishes and rural areas, through programs ranging from the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) to parish censuses and national teleconferences.

"In terms of the future, evangelization will be done whether or not there's a diocesan office," Kluchko pointed out. "The bottom line, I think, is that we need to enable people to allow these things to happen in their ordinary daily experience ...

"I believe a diocesan office can facilitate it, but it will take more than a part-time person," he added.

Facilitation is one way of describing what Karen Docteur was seeking earlier this fall when she called the Office of Evangelization. She was looking for someone to conduct an educational workshop on evangelization at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Hamlin.

As chairwoman of the relatively new parish's 10-member evangelization team, known as "the Fishers," Docteur had noticed a need not only to expand the membership of the team, but also to increase parish awareness and understanding of what evangelization means.

"People are interested, but they want to know what to do, what to say, and how to do it," she explained. "The only thing we've got to go on right now is our own experiences ... I think more people would be apt to do it if they thought they had a professional person to tell them how."

In the nearly two years since the Fishers began, their experiences have proved largely successful. They have used parish census data, town records and informal referrals to locate Hamlin newcomers as well as inactive Catholics.

Team members then call on candidates in their homes, describe the services and activities St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish offers them — ranging from free babysitting to ministry to the separated, divorced or bereaved — and invite them to attend the church.

Despite the Fishers' success in "going it alone," Docteur believes that the scarcity of other parishes with active evangelization programs illustrates the need for diocesan support. "I definitely think we have to have something from the diocese to help us," she



FAITH AND HERITAGE — Lithuanian dancers performed in St. Peter's Square in Rome this past summer as part of a special Mass to celebrate the 600th anniversary of Christianity in Lithuania. About 30 people from the Rochester area traveled to Rome to participate. See page 3 for story and photos.

said. "Probably there are other parishes waiting for the diocese to get them going."

In response to Docteur's request for a workshop, Deacon Claude Lester, director of the Office of Parish Services, agreed to meet with the Fishers later this month. In the absence of an active evangelization office, Lester is also convening a series of three regional gatherings in November. By bringing together people involved in parish evangelization efforts, he hopes to establish a support network that will help fill any gaps left by the diocesan opening.

"We want to hear what people are doing around the diocese," Sister Gaelens explained. "We also want to say to them that 'We'll support you in whatever ways we can, but that maybe you can support one another in regional ways once you know what's going on in other parishes.'"

The range of parish and individual activities that qualify as evangelization efforts is broad enough to defy any easy definition. Parish evangelizers comb through census cards, host coffee hours, serve as RCIA sponsors, knock on doors, invite people back to church, answer their questions and sometimes end up operating a virtual taxi service to church. And their constituency comprises not exclusively the unchurched or the inactive Catholic, but active parishioners as well.

Perhaps in part because the scope of evangelization is so broad and his time and resources were so limited, Kluchko never envisioned his role as administrative, but rather supportive. "The challenge I saw was

to find the areas that were not being addressed and to at least bring some sense of growth, make some kind of dent in those areas," he said.

In particular, Kluchko served as a resource for parishes seeking information on evangelization or trying to form evangelization committees. He tried to evangelize active Catholics by promoting awareness of such Church teachings on the subject as Pope Paul VI's encyclical on evangelization, and by exploring renewal programs available on the parish and diocesan levels. On a personal level, he was intensely interested in the use of mass media, such as cable television and teleconferences, as evangelization tools.

While his ministry as diocesan coordinator focused largely on methodology and techniques, Kluchko believes that evangelization cannot be reduced to a formula for adding new names to parish rolls. "In evangelization, the need is to begin with self," he explained. "The need is not for another program, but for an ongoing process ... The creative challenge (of evangelization) is to bring techniques to bear on the experiences of people."

Responses from parish evangelization ministers echo Kluchko's belief that evangelization begins on the individual level. In fact, Thomas Vallie's experience indicates that the absence of a diocesan office will hardly be felt at the parish level. As one of two evangelization ministers at Transfiguration Parish in Pittsford, Vallie believes that a diocesan office could conceivably offer valuable guidance and input to parishes —

but only if its support was balanced with respect for the integrity of local parish goals and needs.

As director of evangelization at Immaculate Conception Parish in Ithaca, Sister Mary Kruckow, RSM, points to increasing awareness through education as one of the roles a diocesan office should ideally undertake. "Evangelization is not a term that is accepted within the Catholic Church right now," she said. "People just don't know what it is, which is knocking on doors ... and when you go out and do that, I can't tell you how many people say, 'This is the first time I've ever heard of a Catholic Church doing that.'"

The demands of evangelization in rural areas have thus far gone unrecognized in Rochester, according to Sister Kruckow.

On the other hand, she views the diocesan-sponsored gatherings in November as an encouraging prospect. "I'm hoping enough pastors express enough interest to come or to send a representative," she said. "If you don't have the support of pastors, you might as well forget it."

Diocesan-sponsored evangelization meetings are scheduled from 7-8:30 p.m. on: Monday, Nov. 9, at St. Francis DeSales school building in Geneva; Thursday, Nov. 12, at Immaculate Heart of Mary's religious-education building in Painted Post; and Monday, Nov. 16, in Room 6 at the diocesan Pastoral Center. For information, contact Deacon Claude Lester at the Office of Parish Services, (716)328-3210.